

appeared a scene of divine government; and the thickest Egyptian shades fallen on that total vast futurity toward which the spirit of inspiration had thrown some grand though partial gleams.

Nothing tempts the mind so powerfully on, as to have successfully begun to demolish what has been long regarded as most sacred. The soldiers of Czesar probably had never felt themselves so brave, as after they had cut down the Mas-silian grove ; nor the Philistines, as when the ark of the God of Israel was among their spoils: the mind is proud of its triumphs in proportion to the reputed greatness of what it has overcome. And many examples would seem to indicate, that the first proud triumphs over religious faith, involve some fatality of advancing, however formidable the mass of arguments which may obstruct the progress, to further victories. But perhaps the intellectual difficulty of the progress might be less, than a zealous believer would be apt to imagine. As the ideas which give the greatest distinctness to our conception of a Divine Being are imparted by revelation, and rest on its authority, the rejection of that revelation would in a great measure banish those ideas, and destroy that distinctness. . We have but to advert to pure heathenism, to perceive what a faint conception of this Being could be formed by the strongest intellect in the absence of revelation; and after the *rejection* of it, the mind would naturally be carried very far back toward that darkness ; so that some of the attributes of the Deity would immediately become, as they were with the heathens, subjects of doubtful conjecture and hopeless speculation. But from this state of thought it is perhaps no vast transition to that in which his being also shall begin to appear a subject of doubt; since the reality of a being is with difficulty apprehended, in proportion as its attributes are undefinable. And when the mind is brought into doubt, we know it easily advances to disbelief, if to the smallest plausibility of arguments be added any powerful moral cause for wishing such a conclusion. In the present case, there *might* be a very powerful cause, besides that pride of victory which I have just noticed. The progress in guilt, which generally follows a rejection of revelation, makes it still more and more desirable that no object should remain to be feared. It was not strange, therefore, if this man read with avidity, or even strange if he read with something which his wishes completed